



Commonwealth of Massachusetts  
Executive Office of Energy & Environmental Affairs

# Department of Environmental Protection

One Winter Street Boston, MA 02108 • 617-292-5500

Charles D. Baker  
Governor

Karyn E. Polito  
Lieutenant Governor

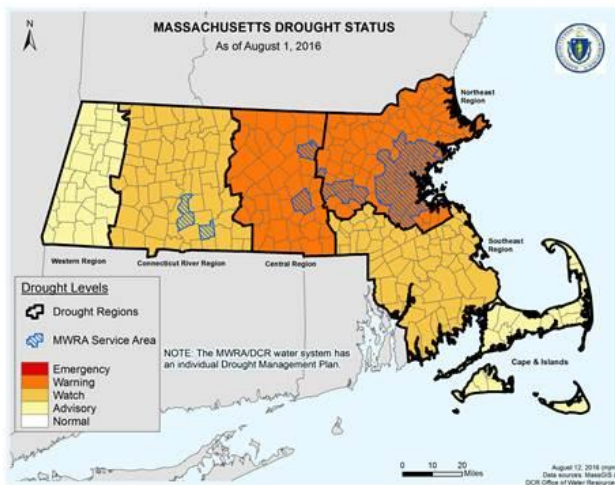
Matthew A. Beaton  
Secretary

Martin Suuberg  
Commissioner

August 15, 2016

To: All registered or permitted Public Water Suppliers and all other users permitted under the Water Management Act  
Re: Drought Warning / Drought Watch / Drought Advisory Status

On August 12, 2016, with most of Massachusetts continuing to experience dry conditions for the fifth straight month, Energy and Environmental Affairs Secretary Matthew Beaton issued a Drought Warning for the Central and Northeast Massachusetts, up from a Drought Watch in July; a Drought Watch for Southeastern Massachusetts and the Connecticut River Valley, up from a Drought Advisory in July; and issued a new Drought Advisory for Western Massachusetts and the Cape and Islands. The declaration resulted from the recommendation issued from an August 12<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Massachusetts Drought Management Task Force. The Drought Management Task Force is comprised of state, federal and local officials. These August 12<sup>th</sup> declarations will remain in effect until water levels return to normal in the affected regions. The map below summarizes Massachusetts' drought status as of this month.



The latest drought status update is published on the Web at

<http://www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/dcr/water-res-protection/water-data-tracking/drought-status.html>.

To confirm which drought region your town or city is in, go to the above website and in the “Drought Maps” section click on the link to “List of Massachusetts Towns by Drought Region”.

Areas within the Drought Warning are currently experiencing precipitation levels 5-8 inches below normal over past four months. A Drought Warning indicates that groundwater, stream flow, and reservoir levels are below normal, and initiates a much more concerted set of government responses including instituting water restrictions, and more intensified monitoring and coordination between the agencies. The declaration of a Drought Watch represents extremely low groundwater and streamflow levels resulting from prolonged periods of precipitation deficit, including a lack of snowfall in the winter months. The declaration of a Drought Watch warrants detailed monitoring of drought conditions, close coordination among state and federal agencies, and technical outreach and assistance to the affected municipalities. Additionally, a Drought Advisory indicates a level of dry conditions that warrants closer tracking by government agencies.

### **Drought Declaration and Water Management Act Permits**

Water Management Act (WMA) permittees may have permit conditions requiring that non-essential outdoor water use be reduced or further restricted in response to the Drought declaration. **If you hold a WMA permit, please review any conditions pertaining to outdoor water use to determine if you are required to implement more stringent restrictions when the Drought Management Task Force declares a Drought Warning, Watch or Advisory.** Non-Public Water Supply permit holders such as golf courses, industrial, commercial, or agricultural users, should also review their permit for water use restriction requirements.

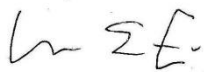
In addition, in response to this year's increasingly dry conditions, **MassDEP has developed more detailed guidance on appropriate outdoor water use restrictions at each drought levels (enclosed with this letter).** This guidance reflects the need to limit outdoor water use to ensure essential needs such as drinking water, fire protection and crop irrigation are being met. It is generally more restrictive than the outdoor water use requirements in Water Management permits. MassDEP strongly recommends that all PWS's, even those without permit conditions requiring them to do so, institute non-essential outdoor water use restrictions.

**Public Water Suppliers (PWS) that impose mandatory use restrictions are required to notify the Department, 310 CMR 22.15(8).** The Department requests you also notify us when you impose voluntary use restrictions. Copies of the form used to notify us of the restrictions can be found at <http://www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/massdep/water/watersheds/municipal-water-use-restrictions.html>. Please send a completed form to: Jennifer D'Urso, Water Management Program, One Winter Street, Boston, MA 02108, or email at [jen.durso@state.ma.us](mailto:jen.durso@state.ma.us). This will help the Department respond to inquiries regarding use restrictions. We appreciate your efforts to help the Department maintain these lists which are useful for answering questions from the public, as well as targeting public outreach and compliance assistance efforts.

**Any PWS having difficulty meeting demands**, drought related or not, may want to request a Declaration of Water Supply Emergency ("Emergency Declaration") from the Department. The provisions of the Emergency Declaration process are outlined in regulations at 310 CMR 36.40. Suppliers should contact your DEP Regional Drinking Water Program Chief (see contact information below), or Duane LeVangie of the WMA Program at (617) 292-5706, to discuss concerns or begin the Emergency Declaration process.

The Emergency Declaration will require the PWS to submit a plan for Departmental review and approval that includes provisions to remedy the emergency. Such a plan could include measures to purchase water from another supplier, use emergency sources, implement aggressive conservation measures, and provide a mechanism to restrict outside water use for those PWSs that do not currently have the ability to implement such measures.

Very truly yours,



Douglas E. Fine  
Assistant Commissioner  
Bureau of Water Resources

Cc: Duane LeVangie, WMA Program Chief, DEP Boston (617-292-5706)  
Thomas Mahin, Drinking Water Chief, DEP NERO (978-694-3226)  
Robert Bostwick, Drinking Water Chief, DEP CERO (508-849-4036)  
Richard Rondeau, Drinking Water Chief, DEP SERO (508-946-2816)  
Deirdre Doherty, Drinking Water Chief, DEP WERO (413-755-2148)  
Rebecca Weidman, Director, BRP-DWM, DEP Boston

Jen Pedersen, MWWA  
Julia Blatt, Mass River Alliance



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## Guidance on Outdoor Water Use Restrictions for Specific Drought Levels

Limiting outdoor water use helps ensure that enough water is available for essential needs, including drinking water, fire protection, crop irrigation and harvesting and our natural resources. Towns may have particular circumstances that make limiting water use more urgent to ensure water in an emergency.

Nothing in a Water Management Permit or Registration prevents a water supplier from implementing water use restrictions that are more stringent than those set forth in their permit, registration or in this guidance. If a community has adopted greater restrictions than those required or recommended by MassDEP, water users should ABIDE BY THEIR WATER SUPPLIER'S RESTRICTIONS.

### Regions in Drought Warning: Severe drought conditions

- Outdoor water use should be banned.

### Regions in Drought Watch: Moderate drought conditions

- Outdoor watering should be limited to “handheld” with a hose or a watering can after 5 p.m. or before 9 a.m. (to avoid evaporative losses).
- Restrict outdoor watering with irrigation systems and sprinklers.
- Watering of municipal parks and recreation fields with irrigation systems and sprinklers may continue, at the water supplier’s discretion, before 9 a.m. and after 5 p.m.
- Filling swimming pools, washing cars and washing buildings should be prohibited.

### Regions in Drought Advisory: Conditions are abnormally dry

- Outdoor watering with irrigation systems and sprinklers should be limited to no more than one day per week.
- Watering with a handheld hose should be limited to after 5 p.m. or before 9 a.m. (to avoid evaporative losses).

Certain water uses are not subject to mandatory restrictions, such as water use:

- For health or safety reasons;
- For the production of food and fiber;
- For the maintenance of livestock;
- To meet the core functions of a business (for example, irrigation by plant nurseries as necessary to maintain stock).